



University of Wisconsin-Extension

Maximizing Forage in Winter Injured and Killed Stands, Spring of 2013

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We are getting reports of significant alfalfa stand damage across Wisconsin and southern Minnesota. The situations vary from low spots only in fields to significant portions of the fields.

I recommend the following:

1) First make sure that “dead” spots are actually dead and not just delayed:

- a. Dig a few plants and check the top 4 inches of the tap root for color and turgor. It should be an off white (like the inside of a potato) and turgid (not ropy). If plants are off white and turgid they are alive and just delayed.
- b. Also check fields that are putting out small shoots. Sometimes the dying plants will produce shoots 1 to 2 inches tall and then die. Again, dig a few plants and look for off-white and turgid taproots.

2) Determine the percentage of field affected and manage accordingly:

- a. If small percentage, simply go over the affected areas with a drill as soon as possible and seed 10 lb/a with a 50/50 mix of Italian (annual) ryegrass and perennial ryegrass.
 - b. If a moderate percentage of the field affected and wanting to take first cutting and then reseed – immediately interseed Italian ryegrass (10 lb/a), take first cutting and then seed corn for maximum yield. An alternative in the southern half of the Wisconsin (especially if expecting dry conditions) would be to seed BMR sorghum-sudangrass (20 lb/a). Oats should be seeded for forage after Aug 1.
 - c. If a large percentage of the field is affected,
 - i. **For rapid forage production to replace first cutting alfalfa** - seed oats (2 bu/a) and peas (20 lb/a) for haylage harvest. This can be with alfalfa seeded underneath (if seeding into a field not previously in alfalfa) or it can be seeded into damaged alfalfa field and followed with corn for silage or BMR sorghum-sudangrass for silage, baleage, or hay.
 - ii. **For most season long yield** - seed corn or BMR sorghum-sudangrass before July 1 (20 lb/a). Corn will likely produce the most tonnage of any forage. Sorghum-sudangrass is a good choice if you expect dry conditions and/or above average temperatures (like last year). Alfalfa can be seeded into a different field at 10 to 12 lb/a with 6 lb/a tall fescue and 2 lb/a Italian (annual) ryegrass. Alternatively one can overseed the alfalfa with oats (2 bu/a) and peas (20 lb/a). The annual ryegrass or oats/peas cover crop will maximize production in the seeding year.
- Nitrogen credits for a corn crop should be based on the alfalfa stand present last fall.